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STANDARD FORM NO. 64

Office Memorandum · UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : S/PA - Mr. Nitze DATE: May 2, 1951

FROM : S/P - Mr. Hooker

Copy sent to Secretary

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Mr. Kennan

George Kennan just telephoned from Princeton to say that Stewart Alsop had asked permission to quote him in opposition to the MacArthur statement that we could take lightly the possibility of Soviet intervention if we were to bomb Manchuria. George said that he had refused to allow Stewart to quote him directly but gave him permission to say that he was known to have the following views:

1. The Russians have a definite and serious strategic interest in Manchuria which would be affected if Manchurian bases were bombed by U.N. planes.

2. Therefore, if such a bombing takes place, the Kremlin will feel called upon to make a solemn and difficult decision.

3. He considers it unlikely that the decision would be to let the matter ride; he believes that they would decide to take some action, the exact nature of which he could not undertake to spell out at this time.

4. But however the Kremlin might decide to react, the least that they might do would in his opinion carry with it an "inner-momentum" which would make it very hard for events to stop there.

Kennan then went on to explain to me (although he did not say whether he had used the same illustration in his conversation with Alsop or whether he had given Alsop permission to use it) that he thought the least they would do would be to turn over considerable Soviet air strength to the Chinese Communists to be operated with Chinese insignia over North Korea. He says that in that event he foresees the contention being made that these forces are being supplied from Siberia and that therefore Siberia is a "privileged sanctuary" which would have to be attacked for the same reason that the privileged sanctuary in Manchuria is attacked. Thus their action would have an "inner momentum" which would make it unlikely that events would stop there.

Kennan

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Kennan did not address himself at any time, and it was clear although he did not say so, that his discussion with Alsop did not involve the issue of bombing Manchuria if U.N. forces were subject to massive air attack.

Kennan went on to say that he felt that sufficient time had elapsed since he had left the Department to permit his making his views known, without impropriety, on a subject of this importance. He added that he felt that those of the public who were interested in knowing his views on this matter were entitled to have them. I said that I would get this information to the Secretary and you immediately, and added that I thought he need feel no misgivings as to the propriety of his action.

Robert G. Hooker, Jr.

S/P:RGHooker, Jr.:enk